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C O N F I D E N T I A L HARARE 001136

SIPDIS

NSC FOR SENIOR AF DIRECTOR FRAZER  
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LONDON FOR GURNEY  
PARIS FOR NEARY

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: ZANU-PF REQUESTS SUSPENSION OF PARTY TALKS

REF: A) HARARE 913 B) HARARE 907 C) HARARE 898 AND

PREVIOUS

Classified By: political section chief Matt Harrington.  
Reasons: 1.5 (B) and (D).

1. (U) ZANU-PF has requested suspension of the talks with the opposition MDC. In a letter dated May 9 (faxed to AF/S) to the Nigerian and South African facilitators, the leader of the ruling party's negotiating team -- Justice Minister Patrick Chinamasa -- cited several reasons for the request. First and foremost, the MDC had filed a legal challenge of the presidential election results. ZANU-PF believed "the judicial process must be allowed to run its course" and that the talks should not resume until final resolution of the court case. Chinamasa also accused the MDC of acting in bad faith by placing "inflammatory newspaper adverts about the ongoing talks and planting false stories in the media alleging ZANU-PF violence." Of course, no Chinamasa rhetorical flourish would be complete without a finger of blame pointed at the United Kingdom. In an apparent reference to an anodyne comment by the British High Commissioner expressing his support for the inter-party talks, Chinamasa wrote "it is not in the interest of the Dialogue for the MDC to use the British Government as a divisive imperial voice in a dialogue that is supposed to be among Zimbabweans for Zimbabweans and their country."

2. (C) A South African diplomat told us that the facilitators -- Kgalema Motlanthe and Adebayo Adedeji -- had not yet arrived in Zimbabwe for next week's round of talks. However, the letters would be conveyed to them, and he suspected they would consult with their respective bosses -- Presidents Mbeki and Obasanjo -- to agree on an appropriate reaction.

3. (C) Gandhi Mudzingwa, MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai's special advisor and a member of the party's negotiating team, was convoked by the South African and Nigerian High Commissioners the morning of May 10, after the state-controlled "The Herald" carried a front-page story titled "Interparty Talks Shelved." They told Mudzingwa that they had received Chinamasa's letter but had not read it (a puzzling assertion since we got our copy of the letter from a South African diplomat) and forwarded it to Motlanthe and Adedeji. In the absence of any further official communication, the MDC should assume that the facilitators will arrive as scheduled on May 12 and that the talks will begin as planned on May 13. Mudzingwa told us the MDC would not press the ruling party to participate in talks, but would likely state publicly that its door is always open for negotiations, should ZANU-PF wish to engage.

4. (C) Comment: ZANU-PF was never enthusiastic about participating in these talks, and has clearly seized on the MDC's legal challenge as a pretext -- along with other flimsy excuses -- for withdrawing. The ruling party was not interested in discussing the legitimacy of Mugabe's election victory, and the suspension request suggests a fear it might be forced to make unwanted concessions. ZANU-PF's move will certainly not strengthen the party's standing with Presidents Mbeki and Obasanjo, who have devoted significant personal attention to Zimbabwe's crisis. It will be interesting to see whether the facilitators merely concur with Chinamasa's request, or whether they push back. For its part, the MDC, which expected little from this forum, can now claim the high moral ground and assume the mantle of magnanimity.

SULLIVAN